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ABSTRACT

The paper provides a framework for identifying trends in planning in Latin American universities for the last 20 years. Identification of the planning trends is based on two main dimensions: the purpose of the relationship between universities and the external environment (organization-centered versus society-centered), and the degree by which the external environment imposes its will on the university (deterministic versus voluntaristic). Possible interactions between the two dimensions result in four main types under which university planning can be classified: deterministic society-centered; voluntaristic society-centers; deterministic organization-centered; and voluntaristic organization-centered. Based on this framework, the publications resulting from three conferences on university planning conducted by the Union of Latin American Universities were analyzed. One of the most predominant ideas about university planning was found to be the "social actor" or voluntaristic society-centered perspective. It is concluded that some new aspects in Latin American higher education could eventually force the predominant planning discourse into a more organization-centered one. Includes 21 references. (JDD)

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TWO DECADES OF PLANNING IN LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES: TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES.

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This paper deals with what has been happening lately in regard to the planning of Latin American universities. We will be sharing some questions and some answers on that topic. More answers are needed, and more questions need to be raised. This is a first attempt with a basic issue: establishment of planning trends among universities in Latin America. Despite the differences between Latin America and the United States, there have been some Latin American authors participating in the strategic planning boom. Was strategic planning part of the actual trends? Was this planning technology a response to a real Latin American problem or was it rather a result of an uncritical exercise? In addition to this transfer of technology, what could be considered Latin American planning innovations? Were Latin American universities planning to have an impact on the socioeconomic conditions? However, there was a first question to be answered: what has been happening regarding university planning in Latin America? This paper attempts to assist in answering this question.

In order to answer the above presented question, it is necessary to introduce a historical perspective. The present situation of Latin America is very different from what it was twenty years ago. The "been happening" could only be defined after examining a period of time. That is why this paper looks at two decades.

The following sections of this paper provide both the framework and the findings in order to start identifying what has been happening in the planning of Latin American universities for the last twenty years. The organized results will allow to analyze current trends and to discuss future developments.[1]

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[1] This paper represents a preliminary report of a major research project which is in its preparation stage.

The Framework of the Study

A framework is needed both to guide and to limit the scope of the study. As part of the framework, it is imperative to define planning. Then, it is necessary to set the stage for the analysis of the planning activity in order to establish some trends.

For the purpose of this paper, we consider university planning as a meta-action, or as an action about the future organization actions of a given university (Escala, 1989). However, what we will be examining is not the planning activity per se, but what has been said about the planning activity. In other words, this paper focuses on the Latin American university planning discourse. We recognize that what has been said is not necessarily what has been done; however, to limit our analysis to the discourse has two main advantages: (a) whereas to examine the planning activity we have either to observe it or to ask participants about it, to examine the planning discourses is a matter of a bibliographic search; (b) participants in a planning activity are not necessarily aware of the ideas behind what they are doing, the discourse is full of explicit ideas. Consequently a more specific objective of this paper is to identify what is being said in Latin American regarding university actions about its own future.

There are two main dimensions on which we would like to base our identification of the planning trends. Both dimensions refer to the relationship between universities and the external environment. [F] One relates to the purpose of the relationship (self-benefit or organization-centered vs. social-benefit or society-centered), the other refers to the degree by which the external environment imposes its will on the university (deterministic vs. voluntaristic).

The dimension which relates to the purpose of the relationship reflects its interactive nature; that relationship between university and society represents a reciprocal transaction between the two actors. Universities acquire from society the inputs they need to grow and survive; society is viewed as a source of organization resources. Also universities provide transformational inputs for the society; they are viewed as sources of societal improvement (Escala, 1988; Khandwalla, 1984).

[F] Although we have described university planning in a broader context (Escala, 1989), for the purpose of this paper we focus on the organizational domains which imply an external attention.

The second dimension is named after a major difference between organizational theories according to Astley and Van de Ven (1983). While for one group of theories, organizations decide on their goals; for the other group, goals are determined from outside. For this paper, this dimension does not separate organizations into two discrete categories, but classifies them based on the degree of external determination of their goals. Figure 1 presents the possible interactions between the two dimensions. As a result, there are four main types under which the university planning discourse could be classified:

1. A deterministic society-centered point of view. This point of view emphasizes the role that universities should play in the development and improvement of society.
   Social issues are the main issues to be considered in the planning activity. What universities should accomplish in regard to those issues is imposed (strongly externally determined) or given (still externally determined. We call this point of view, the "errand-boy" perspective of university planning.

2. A voluntaristic society-centered point of view. From this perspective, universities should focus on promoting the development of society not just as another social resources from which action is requested, but rather as legitimate and crucial participants of social life (struggles, successes, failures, crises). This "social actor" perspective of university planning implies that universities not only decide about the organizational degree of participation and commitment, but also they participate in social planning and in the definition of what universities should be doing.

It is important to clarify that the two above described perspectives are independent from the discussion about the type of social systems which universities defend or propose; it has nothing to do with their revolutionary or reactionary positions. Whether a university plays a reactionary or a revolutionary role (this distinction is always made based upon an ideological position) could be the result of either a deterministic or a voluntaristic phenomenon. In other words, we can find revolutionary "errand-boy" universities as well as reactionary "social actor" universities. Moreover, autonomy should not be confused with voluntarism. The government (from which autonomy is conquered) is not the only external force that determines and imposes. In addition, autonomy could only be affecting administrative matters, not mission ones.

	DETERMINISTIC	VOLUNTARISTIC
SOCIETY-CENTERED	("Errand-boy") The university serves society Society demands from university.	("Social Actor") The university participates with other social actors. Society demands with university.
ORGANIZATION-CENTERED	("Strategist") Society represents threats and opportunities. The university takes advantage and survives.	("Proactivist") Society is a challenge. The university creates its own future.

Figure 1. Types of University Planning Discourse

3. A deterministic organization-centered point of view. This represents the strategic approach to planning. Some authors would not agree about classifying this point of view as deterministic (i.e., Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1985); however, the voluntaristic nature of the strategic perspective they defend refers to organizational actions. We do classify the strategic position as a deterministic one following Ackoff (1981) who clearly states:

> Strategic planning consists of selecting means, goals, and objective, but ideals are either given, imposed by a higher authority, accepted by convention, or, as is usually the case, not formulated. (p. 64)

From this perspective what universities should do is to prepare themselves for a given future by examining social threats and opportunities. The university becomes a "strategist" in order to guarantee its own (and better) future.

4. A voluntaristic organization-centered point of view. Although the main issue is the benefit of the organization, this perspective addressed the issue in a more creative way:

> ... the future is largely subject to creation. From this derived the interactive concept of planning as <u>the design of a desirable future and the invention of ways to bring it about</u>. (Ackoff, 1981, p. 62)

By behaving in a "proactivist" way the university delineates a future in which it is willing to operate.

A university usually faces a paradoxical situation by having to pay attention to both society-centered and organization-centered issues; paradox is a common organizational feature (Cameron, 1986). The planning discourse could focus on either one of the dimensions or on both.

<u>Some Findings</u>

Based on the adopted framework, we decided to analyze a sample of the literature on Latin American university planning. We selected for this paper the publications on the Conferences on university planning which have been conducted by the <u>Unión de Universidades de América Latina</u> (UDUAL), or the Union of Latin American Universities.

UDUAL has held three conferences on planning in the last two decades. What has been stated in these conferences can be considered as the position of a very powerful group of Latin American university people. The conclusions arrived at these conferences are representative of the predominant planning discourse among those people.

First Conference

The First Conference was conducted in 1969 in Concepción, Chile. Four official topics were covered in the event: (a) higher education and development, (b) directions for a dynamic conception of the university in Latin America, (3) general principles of university planning, and (4) methodology of university planning. An important characteristic of this conference was that the discourse was not influenced at all by the balance between supply and demand of employment ideas which has been the prevalent errand for education in the previous decade (Roggi, 1984); even more, one of the presenters (Torfs, 1970) was highly criticized because of his "errand-boy" perspective:

> Torfs considers the university as an instrument, which even accomplishing its high goals, serves a center of power.... His position, to my judgment, are similar to the Napoleonic thesis about a university that serves the State. (Vijil-Ycaza, 1970, p. 197)

This conference did highlight several issues in the direction of conceptualizing the university as a "social actor". Some of the conclusions were (UDUAL, 1970):

1. Universities should be involved in criticizing the current condition and in helping to plot the future.

2. Universities should be committed to social change and transformation through its academic, research and extension activities.

3. Universities should demand their participation in formulating national plans.

4. The planning of each university should be conducted within the general frame of higher education planning as it relates to the rest of the education system and to the global development plans. Higher education planning should be conducted with the participation of universities.

In addition to the planning at the national level, the conference also concluded about the need for institutional planning and the establishment of planning offices at every institution. There were some organization-centered conclusions; these emphasized the need for physical planning (from a deterministic perspective), but at the same time they addressed financial issues by stating the need for looking more stable legal basis type of funding (a more voluntaristic perspective).

According to Rada-Velasco (1981) this conference played a very important role because it gave universities the responsibility to plan. In sum, this conference emphasized the "social actor" view of university planning, as well as some organization-centered considerations ("it develops its own personality and prepares its institutional development"; p. 99).

Second Conference

UDUAL organized the Second Conference in 1975. Although this new conference stated its support to the 1969 conclusions, it certainly emphasized an additional perspective: an organization-centered perspective with some strategic features (UDUAL, 1976). One of the main topic of the Conference was targeted to predict the future and examine effective planning alternative for universities. It was a period of growth; demographic changes as organizational opportunities were discussed; alternatives to get more funds from the State were part of the agenda. However, the more busy universities were trying to take advantage of the enrollment pressures, the more they were becoming "errand-boys". In other words, the "this is an opportunity to grow" recommendation has a "society demands from us to train as many people as we can" component.

In contrast to Rada-Velasco (1981) who considers this conference less productive that the First one; we believe its conclusions reflect the richness of a paradoxical perspective of planning. It introduces an important organization-centered emphasis to the planning discussion in addition to previously accepted society-centered ones.

Third Conference

The Third Conference was held in Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1985 during a period of economic crisis. Many universities did not attend the Conference because of their financial situation. Education, science, culture and research had become non-priority activities for Latin American governments; they were more concerned about their own survival, about international demands. The prevalent planning discourse of this Conference was of a "social actor" university.

Rodriguez-Castelo (1986) set the climate of the conference from the very beginning when he stated the challenge of Latin America, universities: "our challenge is how to plan the development of our nations through the development of our universities" (p. 59). Aguilar-Villanueva went even further when analyzed the general crisis:

> It is necessary to avoid the false statement of the problem which is conditioned by a spontaneous non-reflective image that explains the crisis of development and the crisis of the university as two external and unrelated crises; both as heterogenous and disconnected social processes. The crisis is not something that originated and evolved outside of the university; on which the university had nothing to do. The crisis is also an effect of the university and the university is another cause of the crisis.
> (pp. 1986, 63-64)

Although these two positions represent personal discourses, they do provide an interesting deviant perspective of what had been the predominant ideas. These two authors present a "social actor" perspective and they also emphasize a "proactivist" perspective. The message is clear: the present of the universities (their yesterday future) is a result of the action of the university; there is not another one to be blamed for it. Consequently, planning should not be a matter of taking advantage of a predicted future, it is a matter of building a future. The only way to build your own desired future is by being a "social actor". However, either by omission or by commission universities are always building the future. The other side of this mixed perspective is what Banguero expressed: "the underdevelopment of our universities is the best guarantee for the persistence of the underdevelopment of our nations" (1986, p. 322).

Other presenters criticized the "errand-boy" perspective which attempted to define universities a training centers (Falconi-Espinosa, 1986); and emphasized the "social actor" perspective and the role of universities in scientific and technological development (Orellana-Ricaurte, 1986).

The participants signed a final statement, the Declaración de Guayaquil de las Universidades Latinoamericanas (1986), which included a group of recommendation regarding the type of participation of universities in the social and political arena. The statement also includes three recommendations directly related to university planning:

1. The need for planning units at every institution in order to relate the academic programs with the future development of each country.

2. The establishment of national higher education coordinating planning units to support and criticize national planning.

3. The need to support the national planning units when their planning objectives represent the best national interest.

Thus the Third Conference supported the "social actor" perspective and its official planning discourse did not include a clear reference to Aguilar-Villanueva's deviant proposal. The official planning discourse in 1985 was almost the same as in 1969.

Discussion

Based on our analysis of the three conferences held by UDUAL, one of the most predominant ideas about university planning in Latin America has been the "social actor" perspective. The planning discourse has consistently insisted for two decades in the needed participation of universities in the planning of national development, and in their coordinated contribution to that common purpose. The "errand-boy" perspective has not been part of the general discourse; the fact that Falconi-Espinosa (1985) attacked that perspective could be a sign of the existence of a practice which is divorced from the discourse. Nonetheless, what has been said emphasizes a voluntaristic and society-centered perspective of planning.

The organization-centered perspective haven been approached in the discourse in a more timid way. There has not been a consistent defense of a particular perspective. The examined discourse is far more concerned with social issues than with organizational ones. Organization-centered concerns were more present during the 1975 Conference which reflected the excitement of the universities about their material achievements.

There are some new aspects in Latin American higher education which could eventually force the revision of the predominant planning discourse turning it into a more organization-centered one. First, we can find an almost general period of retrenchment; during this type of periods, institutions tend to overemphasize the need to assure the survival and continuing vitality of the institutions (Caruthers & Lott, 1981). Second, the privatization of higher education in Latin American is another force which favors a more organization-centered planning discourse. When Daniel Levy

analyzes the reported success of the private success in Latin American higher education, analyzes such success based on a more society-centered perspective:

> Even accepting the findings, one can legitimately question their desirability and scope. Evaluation based only on fulfillment of the chosen goals of particular institutions and their constituencies is an incomplete and biased evaluation. To achieves one's chosen goals is not necessarilly to do well from other perspectives. To serve the desires and interest of particular individuals, clasess, groups, and organizations is not necessarily to serve society. (1986, p. 310)

While the Third Conference still insisted almost exclusively on a "social actor" perpective, there are some evidence of forces which favor a more "strategist" discourse, or perhaps a "strategist" and "errand-boy" discourse in which the determinants of the future of the institutions were the new sponsors of higher education in Latin America. It is very important to follow the development of the planning discourse; it will indicate the direction of change. On the other hand, more research is needed to analyze the consistency between the planning discourse, the planning activity and the planning implementation. The non-UDUAL discourse should be included in the analysis; it should be necessary to follow up some deviant discourses. The very nature of the university mission relates to the planning discourse.

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